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MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE
83rd session
Agenda item 6

MSC 83/6/10
20 July 2007
Original: ENGLISH

LRIT-RELATED MATTERS

Use of LRIT for maritime safety and environmental protection

Submitted by Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the European Commission

SUMMARY

<i>Executive summary:</i>	This document invites the Committee to agree that the information from the LRIT system may be used for maritime safety and marine environmental protection
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraph 12
<i>Related document:</i>	COMSAR 9/12/7

Introduction

1 This document is a follow-up to previous submissions and invites the Committee, in supporting and confirming the decision by MSC 79, to agree to extend the purpose and scope of the LRIT system to include maritime safety and environmental protection.

Scope of the proposal

2 SOLAS regulation V/19-1 explicitly refers to the use of LRIT for security and search and rescue purposes as well as for “other purposes as agreed by the organization”.

3 MSC 79 agreed (MSC 79/23, paragraph 5.68) that the purpose and scope of LRIT should be extended ultimately to include maritime safety and environmental protection applications. MSC 79 also agreed that COMSAR 9 should be advised to bear in mind that the ultimate objective was to extend, at the appropriate time, the purpose and scope of the LRIT to include safety and environmental protection applications.

4 MSC 80 recalled (MSC 80/24, paragraph 5.56) that MSC 79 had agreed that the purpose and scope of LRIT should be extended ultimately to include safety and environmental protection applications, subject to the resolution of the technical issues by the COMSAR Sub-Committee. However, before being able to embark on the detailed technical consideration of the extension of LRIT by the COMSAR Sub-Committee, it would be necessary for the Committee to define the safety applications and for the Marine Environment Protection Committee to define the environmental protection applications for which LRIT would be used.

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5 Against this background, the LRIT system was adopted by MSC 81 in May 2006 as part of SOLAS chapter V, following a submission to COMSAR 9 by Cyprus, Luxembourg, Spain, the Netherlands and Sweden (COMSAR 9/12/7).

6 When placing the regulation on LRIT in SOLAS chapter V and not under SOLAS chapter XI-2 (Special measures to enhance maritime security), the SOLAS Contracting Governments (Contracting Governments) clearly indicated that its scope shall be widened to include maritime safety and protection of the marine environment.

7 SOLAS chapter V has an overall objective to establish and maintain the safety of human lives at sea and to prevent accidents through a regulatory framework for the handling of ships.

Expected added value

8 The co-sponsors of this document are not proposing any amendments to SOLAS regulation V/19-1. The LRIT information specified in this SOLAS regulation V/19-1.5 is adequate to use for maritime safety and marine environment protection purposes and would provide a significant added value for these objectives.

9 The use of LRIT for safety and environmental purposes would provide significant added value through an improvement of the knowledge of ships positions and identity.

10 In particular, it would:

- complement or replace the reporting requirements with early identification and tracking of ships in transit;
- improve the monitoring of movements of ships carrying hazardous and polluting goods;
- improve the possibilities for monitoring ships in routing/traffic separation systems; and
- facilitate the identification of possible polluters at sea (illegal discharge) as it would be possible to combine LRIT reports with satellite images.

The proposed extension shall not affect the contents of the report and the structure of the LRIT system and shall not delay the introduction of LRIT.

11 It is the firm belief of the co-sponsors of this document that demand for LRIT information will increase significantly if Contracting Governments are able to receive and use such information for the purposes of maritime safety and marine environment protection. This, in its turn, will contribute to ensuring the financial viability and sustainability of the LRIT system which form the key factors for the success of the system from the very start. Hence, it is important to take a decision on expanding the scope for which LRIT information may be used at MSC 83.

Action requested of the Committee

12 The Committee is invited to agree that Contracting Governments may be able to receive and use LRIT information about ships, in accordance with SOLAS regulation V/19-1, for maritime safety and marine environment protection purposes as well as to address the issue to MEPC to take note and decide as appropriate.